AN ANSWER TO THE SECOND PART OF RIGHTS OF MAN.

IN TWO LETTERS TO THE AUTHOR.

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AN

ANSWER, &c.

LETTER I.

SIR,

FROM the contempt with which you treat all the anſwers to your laſt publication, your object is evidently not to diſcuſs, but to inflame—I have in a late publication offered my objections to your principles, and my ſuſpicion of the motives which have induced you to propagate them. I warned my country againſt the counſels of an Itinerant Patriot, who was wedded to the cauſe of the French revolutioniſts, and who well knew

that confuſion in this country would be the the beſt reſtorative to the affairs of France. Your letter to Monſieur de la Fayette has confirmed the prudence of that caution.— You inadvertently aſſure him, that you will labor as faſt as you can, and that *France will be in peace and ſafety* when *ſurrounded with revolutions.* I join with you, Sir, in ardent wiſhes for the re-eſtabliſhment of order and tranquility in that great empire. I agree with you in thinking, that a convulſion in this country would revive their finances, and tend to reſtore that peace and ſafety which they have ſo ſeverely felt the loſs of. But if the ſhattered fabrick of France can only float upon the wrecks of Britain, I pray God it may periſh in the ſtorm!

You deduce, Sir, the great approbation of your book from the rapidity of its circulation. I do not wiſh to diſconcert your vanity, but I wiſh to undeceive thoſe who may be miſled by the argument. Independent of the underhand means which you and your adherents have adopted to encreaſe its ſale, your

your profits might have been much greater, had you been the author of a work even leſs approved. The Newgate Calendar, many of the vileſt memoirs, ſome books of the moſt paltry ſcandal, and ſome of the moſt infamous libels on morality and religion, have met with more extenſive ſucceſs. An author who teaches mankind that they have no duties, is likely to be much more read than one who acknowledges and enforces the various ties with which we enter into life. The lovers of novelty, the turbulent, the profligate and the diſcontented, have all been gratified by your maxims, and become purchaſers of your publication. The number of copies you have ſold, cannot therefore be a matter of ſurprize; and I truſt there are few in this country, wrong-headed enough to conſtrue it into a proof of merit.

So much for your panegyric on your own work. I paſs now to your chapter on Society and Civilization. You begin by aſſerting, that a great part of the order which reigns among mankind, is not the effect of government but of the principles of ſociety.

As it is difficult even to conceive a ſociety exiſting without a government, I do not well know how to inveſtigate your propoſition. I ſhall confine myſelf therefore to the conſideration of the arguments and inſtances that you bring forward in its ſupport.

Your arguments are theſe:

Firſt, that common intereſt eſtabliſhes good order. Secondly, that men are naturally attached to ſociety. Thirdly, that for two years after the American war, the ſeveral ſtates were without a government. Fourthly, that the riots in England were cauſed and not ſuppreſſed by government; and, fifthly, that aſſociations of trade are carried on without any interference on the part of government.

Firſt then, it is undoubtedly true, that if every man conſidered common intereſt, or indeed his own, he would neither commit riots in the ſtreets, nor depredations of any ſort on the property of his neighbours—without an active government, however, theſe evils

evils would very often occur, and I believe no hungry beggar could be perſuaded to forego the contents of the baker's or butcher's ſhop, on abſtract theories of the common intereſts of ſociety.

Secondly, however ſtrong the natural love of ſociety may be in men, without ſome better ſecurity for their property than the capricious will of the multitude, that natural love would be very ſoon extinguiſhed. It was probably the eagerneſs of mankind for the ſecurity of government, that led them into the error of deſpotic monarchies. The neceſſity of ſome government ſoon occurred, and that was the one that they could quickeſt form.

Thirdly, that America was two years without government is not fact. America was under martial law, the ſevereſt of all governments; and beſides, it ſtill continued to benefit by the old eſtabliſhed forms of government, which could not ceaſe to operate on their habits, the moment they were ſuſpended.

Fourthly, your account of the riots of 1780, is a groſs miſtatement. The fact was ſimply this—One claſs of citizens prejudiced againſt another, and not at all operated on by the *common intereſt* of both, was jealous of its approaching advantages, and roſe to oppoſe them. The governing power interfered, and put a ſtop to contentions that would otherwiſe have proceeded to the moſt cruel extremities.

Fifthly, It is ſo far from true, that trading ſocieties carry on their buſineſs, and act merely on the principles of private compact; that not a partnerſhip exiſts, but is under the ſanction of government; and every company in England, is making perpetual applications to the legiſlature, for the ratification of its private regulations and bye-laws.

The natural love of ſociety, and our common intereſt, have no doubt a conſiderable influence on civilized man; but our propenſities to evil, and our eagerneſs to obtain that by force, which we are too idle to earn by induſtry, have an influence almoſt equally exten-

extenſive. To counteract this, we inveſt the government under which we live, with the ſacred powers of ſupremacy, and ſociety ſhews its wiſdom, not by the portion it withholds, but by the manner in which it diſtributes them. You ſeem to think, that government has no operation but when it actually interferes. In this, however, you manifeſt your little knowledge of the fact; for once that a law operates in puniſhing an offender, it operates many hundred times in preventing the crime, and the ſilent effect of government may be computed in the ſame proportion.

Your ſecond chapter relates to the origin of the preſent old governments. You ſay that the obſcurity in which the origin of the preſent old governments is buried, implies the iniquity and diſgrace with which they began. You might juſt as well ſay, that the obſcurity in which the origin of man is buried, implies the iniquity and diſgrace of the creation. I am not now arguing for one ſpecies of government or another. I am merely expoſing the fallacy of your argu-

ments, for having detected your design. I am anxious to disarm you of the means of forwarding it. Your ingenious comments on the horrid consequences of monarchical governments, and the train of warfare and cruelty that you derive from them are equally fallacious. The purest democracies that the world ever contained, made war and conquest their trade. The republics of Rome and Carthage, may vie with Nero and Alexander in cruelty and ambition. Jugurtha and Regulus would gladly have changed lots with the captives of the most haughty monarchs. It was not governments but men, that were cruel and imperious. Men must have employment, and before the wide field of commerce was opened to them, war was the only range for their restless disposition. Born in the midst of arms, and educated in camps, booty was their support, and triumph their recreation. But the present age affords a very different prospect. The introduction of commerce into every nation of the world, affords a new occupation for its inhabitants, and a new measure of its comparative greatness. The accumulation of

capital

capital is found to be the accumulation of ſtrength, and peace is cheriſhed as the tender nurſe of its growing power. To wield the capital of a country to the greateſt advantage, is become an object of greater importance than the diſcipline of armies. The people have gradually learnt, that they can enrich themſelves without ruining others; and when they have no longer provoked war, governments have no longer purſued conqueſts. Governments have long been aiming at univerſal peace, and as ſoon as men were ripe for the change, they have retired from the direction of the field, to regulate and facilitate commerce, to ſecure the fruits of private induſtry, and to encourage the increaſe of the funds deſtined for its ſupport. As long as a great part of Europe preſerved its martial diſpoſition, that government would have been very ignorant of its duty, that had not kept alive enough of the ſpirit of war for its defence. It is not in the power of governments to ſuppreſs the activity of man. Before commerce was univerſal, it broke forth in war, and governments were wiſe to aim at victory. Now

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that it purſues the golden allurements of commerce, and that the love of traffic has ſucceeded to the love of conqueſts, governments aſſiſt us in another way, and protect the harveſt of peaceful induſtry. This is all that we can look for from them, and we may thank commerce for a ſyſtem of peace, that neither nations nor monarchs could have effected.

Your third chapter opens by obſerving, "the contradiction between the principles "of old governments, and the improved "condition to which commerce and civili-"zation can carry ſociety." I confeſs that it is by no means matter of ſurprize to me, that the early governments ſhould have been formed on principles very ill ſuited to the advanced ſtages of ſociety; for that a nation at war with all its neighbours, ſhould require one ſort of government, and that a nation trading with all the world ſhould require another, is ſurely very natural. The great changes which have taken place in the European governments, would not have been at all ſuitable to the early ages. Theſe changes

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conſiſt in the mode in which the various branches of the ſovereign power has been diſtributed. In the early times, when every day produced battles and ſtruggles, and before ſpecific laws had provided for the infinite variety of human crimes; the urgent calls for immediate ſuccour and prompt juſtice, placed (perhaps neceſſarily) the whole authority, legiſlative and executive, in the monarch's hands. When the ſyſtem of ſudden invaſions and internal warfare ceaſed, the vaſt authority of kings began to undergo various modifications and reſtrictions. The powers of legiſlating were gradually withdrawn from the crown, transferred to an ariſtocracy, re-aſſumed by the people at large, or delegated jointly to the three great orders of the ſtate. Such are the changes that have been gradually taking place, according as the various times, countries and circumſtances have required them, from the earlieſt annals of hiſtory to the days we live in. In our ſyſtem, a ſhare of the ſovereign power is committed to an hereditary crown; a ſhare to an hereditary ariſtocracy, and a ſhare to the repreſentatives of the people. In the courſe

courſe of ſeveral centuries, we have ſeen many experiments in government, but experience has taught us, that no other ſyſtem can carry a nation by ſuch rapid and ſteady ſteps to greatneſs. Notwithſtanding the local advantages, and internal reſources of France, the greateſt monarchy in Europe: notwithſtanding the immenſe capital of Holland, the richeſt republic in the world, we have been enabled to withſtand both in war, and to rival each in commerce. Not all your wild theory againſt hereditary crowns, and hereditary nobility, can make us contemplate them with diſguſt, when practice is ſo ſtrongly in their favour. We feel them as ſteady poiſes in our conſtitution, that give it weight and dignity. We conſider them as pledges for the permanence of our liberty, and antidotes to the daily convulſions to which the republics of all ages have been ſubject. It is impoſſible that a form of government ſhould ever occur to which no objection can be ſtarted. But with regard to hereditary governments foſtering more commotions than thoſe purely elective or repreſentative, you are too well verſed in hiſtory,

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not to be conſcious of your miſrepreſentation. There have indeed been ſome famous diſputes in family ſucceſſion, that have made much noiſe in hiſtory, ſuch as the York and Lancaſter diſturbances; yet even the claims of thoſe two houſes could not be ſupported with more outrage than the cauſes of Marius and Sylla. But it is not by a few ſuch violent commotions, that we muſt eſtimate the internal diſcord and miſery of a country. The diſcord that makes a country really wretched, is the never-ceaſing diſcord that prevails in elective governments, where every office of ſtate is the object of daily canvaſs, and the whole country is ſeparated into different factions animated by jarring intereſts. In England the power of the crown, and of the houſe of lords, are ſubject only to the controul of the laws; but the power of the repreſentatives of the people, is ſubject to the controul of diſmiſſion. The vaſt power placed in the hands of the repreſentatives, being thus under the immediate controul of the people, gives us all the ſecurity of the purely repreſentative ſyſtems; and the appointments of the officers of ſtate being

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veſted in the crown, gives us all the peace and tranquility of the purely hereditary. Had we been thoroughly diſguſted with our conſtitution, the arrival of a ſtranger from the continent of America to aſſiſt in its overthrow, would have been an act of ſuſpicious heroiſm; but loving it, and cheriſhing it as we do, your eagerneſs to create averſion to it, can only bear the interpretation I have given it.

In your fourth chapter, you come to treat of conſtitutions; and in this chapter it is, that you endeavour to collect the moſt plauſible arguments againſt all the old governments of the world. You derive all governments from the two ſources of delegation and aſſumption, and with a degree of unparalelled aſſurance, conclude that all governments which you cannot trace to the ſource of delegation, muſt be founded on aſſumption. Nothing can be ſo full of error and artifice as your aſſertion, that "in viewing this ſub-" ject, the caſe and circumſtances of Ame-" rica preſent themſelves as in the beginning " of a world." The argument you wiſh to form

form is this—America, like the old world, found itſelf without a government. America had its free choice of governments, and choſe republicaniſm. The caſe and circumſtances of the old world, were like thoſe of America; if it had had its free choice, it would have choſen republicaniſm alſo; the ſubſiſting governments therefore, muſt have ſprung not from delegation but aſſumption. All this is falſe. If any two circumſtances are diſſimilar in the extreme, the origin of government in the old world, and in America, are compleatly ſo. The great leaders of the affairs of America, who had to deal with a mixt race of people, diſperſed over a vaſt tract of country, were well aware that they could only engage them in their projects, by the number of allurements they could hold out. For this purpoſe they propoſed a ſyſtem of government, that afforded a proſpect of conſequence to a vaſt number of the people—popularity was the great object of every meaſure that was ſtarted, and the neceſſity of flattering the multitude, impaired the leading features of their conſtitution. The great influx of light which had

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been pouring in for ages from the various ſources of knowledge and experience, gave them little cauſe to fear, that diſtant empires would leave their domeſtic concerns to come and embroil theirs. Any form of government was adequate to conduct their affairs for the preſent, and that which enſured the moſt applauſe was the beſt ſuited to the moment. The infant ſocieties of the old world, were in a ſituation quite the reverſe, ſurrounded by wars, engaged in perpetual conflicts, unacquainted with forms of government and their effects, unenlightened by practice or by theory, and not yet diſguſted with battle, or ſoftened by intercourſe; Vigilance and activity, were the objects of their governments, and they delegated powers ſuited to the purpoſe. As times and manners have altered, various reforms and alterations have been adopted in different countries; thoſe that have been moſt oppreſſed, have been driven to revolutions; thoſe that have been moſt impatient have ſought them; but thoſe that have beſt underſtood mankind, have ſuffered the reins of monarchy and ariſtocracy to be gradually relaxed. No wiſe

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nation will ever annihilate thoſe orders of its ſociety, which have conducted it with glory through the dangers and difficulties of ſucceſſive ages. Power can be brought to its proper level, without the precarious expedient of raſh revolutions. Thoſe who have applied no other remedy to diſeaſed ſtates than *new-modelled conſtitutions*, have generally outrun the times, and given poiſon with their medicine. As far as I know, every nation in the globe that has diſmiſſed its government like its ſervants, and every government that has treated its people like its ſlaves, has daſhed its exiſtence with broils and convulſions, and either ſunk into contempt, or anticipated its deſtruction. The riches and fertility of the eaſt could not uphold the Aſiatic empires againſt the ſyſtem of ſlavery that oppreſſed them; and Rome, whoſe government was one day committed to monarchs, another day re-aſſumed by the people, and another day confided to a perpetual dictator, as ſuited the fluctuating caprices of the times, lived only to learn, that ſhe had ſtrength enough to vanquiſh the world, but that ſhe had not ſteadineſs enough to pre-

ſerve herſelf. From the abolition of her monarchy to the acceſſion of the emperors, was one conſtant ſcene of ſtruggle and confuſion. Many times during this period, did ſhe make uſe of the *boaſted prerogative of new forming her conſtitution*, and juſt ſo many ſtabs did ſhe give to the permanence and ſecurity of her government. At length, weary of continually aſſerting a right that only opened a road to the wild projects of ambitious and deſigning men, ſhe was reduced to ſubmit to a ſucceſſion of deſpots, who have finally conſigned her to prieſtcraft, poverty and oblivion.

The obſcurity in which the early periods of all hiſtory are involved, makes it impoſſible to determine, what was the original conſtitution of any country. Nor is it at all material. In England, for inſtance, we acknowledge the validity of various rights and prerogatives, though hiſtory does not inform us of the time and manner in which they were delegated. When circumſtances have made it neceſſary to alter thoſe rights and prero-

prerogatives, we have neither had recourſe to the diſmiſſion of our government, or tamely ſubmitted to continue in error. When our governors have infringed on our rights, we have been firm and reſolute; and where the voice of the nation has called for reform, the mild but irreſiſtible influence of public opinion, has given us, by gradual conceſſions, what others have bought by blood and rebellion. It is becauſe we have underſtood better than others, the relative duties of people and governors, that we have reaped more than others of the advantages of government. It is from this cauſe that we have known leſs than moſt nations, of the ſad viciſſitudes of anarchy and deſpotiſm; and it is from this cauſe, that we have made one even progreſſive advance to unequalled greatneſs. By preſerving the forms and principles of our conſtitution with the moſt ſacred care, we eſtabliſh the conviction of the *ſecurity* and *permanence* of our government. It is this ſecurity that draws to Britain the capitals of other nations, and that makes the riches and luxuries of the earth flow through the hands of Britiſh merchants. It is on

this *wiſe* and *ſteady* policy, that we build our happineſs, our peace, and our repoſe; by adopting it we have rivaled the proſperity of the greateſt empires; and by adhering to it, we ſhall eſcape their fate.

You, Sir, are, I know, averſe to every ſyſtem that counteracts the means of repeated rovolutions; it is on this ground that you oppoſe every ſort of inheritance, whether it relates to government or to individuals. Return to your beloved America, and there propagate the new doctrines of your refined philoſophy. TELL THE INDUSTRIOUS FARMER, TOILING TO ENRICH HIS CHILDREN, THAT THE NEXT GENERATION WILL HAVE A RIGHT TO ESTABLISH A NEW CONSTITUTION AND NEW PRINCIPLES OF PROPERTY. WARN THE RICH MERCHANT, WILLING TO ASSIST HIS COUNTRY WITH A LOAN, THAT THE NEXT GENERATION WILL BE AT LIBERTY TO DISSOLVE THE CONTRACT BY WHICH IT WAS OBTAINED. REMIND THE WARRIOR AND THE STATESMAN, EMPLOYED IN FIGHTING THE BATTLES, AND DIRECTING THE COUNSELS OF

HIS COUNTRY, WHOM THE LOVE OF GLORY ONLY PREVENTS FROM INDULGING HIS WISHES FOR RETIREMENT AND REPOSE, THAT HIS HONOURS SHALL PERISH WITH HIMSELF, AND NO TRACES OF HIS DEAR-BOUGHT DISTINCTION SHALL BE VISIBLE IN THE PERSONS OF HIS DESCENDANTS. Go, and contemplate the effects of theſe kind labours. Reſtrict our powers and our happineſs within the narroweſt limits that you can. When both are in their moſt flouriſhing condition, God knows on what fleeting bubbles they depend. But it has been reſerved for you to render the acquiſitions of this world doubly precarious, and to deaden the purſuit of wealth and glory, by extending the tax of mortality from the purſuer to the poſſeſſion. Tyrants have entailed miſeries on particular countries, and miſtaken patriots have led them to their ruin; but you aim your blow at a more extended circle. You would baniſh from the earth the great ſtimulus to induſtry and exploit. You would rob youth of its activity, and age of its conſolation.

Having now gone through your principal objections to hereditary governments, and ſhewn that your favourite ſyſtem of deſtroying and new modelling them at pleaſure, has been the ruin of every nation that has adopted it; I ſhall take a ſhort view of the plan that you propoſe for remedying the exiſting evils of this country. Whether the defect is in your ability or your deſign, I muſt leave to the public to judge; but never were projects ſo replete with miſchiefs and with error. But I ſhall now take my leave for the preſent, and commit the conſideration of this extenſive ſubject to a ſecond letter.

I am, &c. &c.

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LET-

LETTER II.

SIR,

THAT we owe in a great meaſure to America, the glorious ſyſtem of peace, that Europe is gradually adopting, is a truth which I believe cannot be controverted; but we owe it not to its revolution, but to its trade: the vaſt market which it affords for the produce and manufactures of Europe, has given a ſpur to the induſtry of the old world, and brought to maturity the knowledge of the true intereſts of commercial countries, which had ſcarcely budded before. As you repeat the erroneous obſervation of your former chapter, I muſt repeat my anſwer to it. You again aſſert, that the ſyſtem of war, which has for ages haraſſed mankind, ſprung from the ſelfiſh policy of governments. It ſprung neither from their artifice nor their intrigues; it owed its birth to the nature of man, and its continuance

to his ignorance. Man, ever eager to better his ſituation, took the firſt means that preſented themſelves, and before he learnt how to improve his condition, without injury to his neighbours, he did not heſitate to improve it at their expence; the facility with which individuals in the ſame country could exchange their reſpective property, ſoon taught them to prefer traffic to robbery; but the difficulties of carriage and navigation, made it a long while before nations underſtood their intereſts as well as individuals. Whilſt the power of a nation could only be increaſed by increaſe of territory, conqueſt was equally its aim, whether it followed the counſels of a court, or regulated its own affairs like the Athenians. Governments have had the odium of conducting wars, but it is man that deſerves the reproach of creating them; it was the ſame paſſion for his own aggrandizement, which now engages him in the lucrative purſuits of traffic, that formerly attached him to the ſplendid lottery of war. It is this paſſion that made him always draw the ſword with avidity, and ſheath it with reluctance; and it was this paſſion that

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made him tear from the bowels of the earth, the cruel implements of battle; this ſad perverſion of the gifts of the creation, could only be corrected by a more than human hand; and it laſted till all-bounteous Providence, which gave us the materials, ſent commerce to teach us how to employ them. But commerce was at firſt very ill underſtood; and here again men, more than governments, miſtaking the loſſes of others for their own gains, were to blame. Almoſt all nations, from their ignorance and jealouſy, have petitioned and even compelled governments to forward their commercial intereſts, by depreſſing the manufactures and induſtry of other countries, rather than by encouraging their own; the great increaſe of the advantages and importance of commerce, occaſioned by the American market, has made its principles more ſtudied and better underſtood; in this way alſo America has had a conſiderable influence, in reſtoring harmony to the old world, and in uniting jealous rivals, by the ſtrong ties of common intereſt: it is a fact ſomewhat extraordinary, that till long after the trade of America became very

conſiderable, this ſimple truth, that the riches of ſurrounding countries promotes the wealth of our own, was never acknowledged; that till within theſe few years, it was never propagated in theory, and that even now it has ſcarcely any influence on practice. Was the government of this country to attempt a perfect free trade between England and Ireland, the national clamours would be ſtronger than thoſe of the French, on the ratification of the commercial treaty. Man is not yet ripe for ſuch great and liberal plans, and thoſe who have to regulate his affairs, muſt conſult his temper; anticipated liberality is the worſt of all policies, and the moſt calculated to prolong prejudice; it is on this principle that I am againſt all theoretical reformation. Providence has kindly given us an occupation, that unites our intereſts with our improvement. Commerce is the true corrective of mankind, and by purſuing it, we ſhall gradually exterminate the wretched remains of ignorance and error. I ſhall conclude my reflections on this head, by adopting for once your own expreſſions.

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" * In contemplating the whole of this ſub-
" ject, I extend my views into the depart-
" ment of commerce. In all my publica-
" tions, where the matter would admit, I
" have been an advocate for commerce, be-
" cauſe I am a friend to its effects; it is a
" pacific ſyſtem, operating to cordialize
" mankind, by rendering nations, as well
" as individuals, ufeful to each other,—as
" to *mere theoretical reformation, I have never*
" *preached it up*,—the moſt effectual proceſs
" is, that of improving the condition of
" man by means of his intereſt, and it is on
" this ground that I make my ſtand."

I cannot in the ſame manner adopt the next commercial poſition that you lay down. You ſay, that † *a nation cannot be buyer and ſeller of her own merchandize, and that the power to buy muſt reſide without herſelf.*—Nothing can be more remote from fact than this: in the traffic that is carried on between the farmer and the manufacturer, the great baſis and ſupport of the whole fabrick of

* Rights of Man, ſecond Part, page 82.

† Rights of Man, ſecond Part, page 83, line 19.

trade,

trade, the power of buying and ſelling both reſide within the nation. Foreign commerce is purſued, not from its being neceſſary that the purchaſer of our commodities ſhould be a foreign country, but from the impoſſibility of buying the articles which they ſell us in our own: if Yorkſhire could furniſh us with teas, and other counties with wine and raw ſilk, the trade of Canton and of Bourdeaux would have but little influence on our proſperity; we ſhould never frequent their markets; the wealth of China is a caſe in point, and is a practical expoſition of your miſtake; foreign commerce has indeed ſupplied it with the great inſtrument of circulation, but its vaſt riches, which it has preſerved longer than any nation of the globe, were wholly accumulated by internal commerce, and not one particle by foreign commerce, which it has ever deſpiſed and neglected. That the preſent increaſe of our commerce is in no reſpect owing to the regulations of government, is another aſſertion that I ſhall contradict, with as much ſteadineſs, and a good deal more truth, than you affirm it: the effects of the commercial treaty

have

have been too much and too recently felt in this country to be forgot; the effects of the union in Scotland, are as well known, and the encreaſing proſperity of that country equals that of America. Your compariſon between the increaſing trade of England and of America, can only lead to fallacious concluſions, and is, I ſuppoſe, deſigned to imply the ſuperior happineſs of America. But a country thinly inhabited, with abundance of fertile land and convenient harbours, muſt at * firſt neceſſarily make more rapid advances in wealth, than a country fully peopled and already rich in the extreme. The compariſon, however, abſurd as it is, ſerved your purpoſe; it ſeemed to indicate a defect in government at home, and that was all you aimed at. I ſhall not argue with you on your poſition relative to the balance of trade. I have no doubt in my own mind, of the accuracy of Mr. Pitt's ſtatement, yet as I was not preſent at his ſpeech upon the ſubject, I will not enter into the diſcuſſion. But that the real wealth of Britain has in-

* Smith's Wealth of Nations.

creaſed,

creaſed, and continues to increaſe in the moſt rapid manner, is a fact on which there are not two opinions. I ſhall conclude theſe obſervations on your commercial tenets, with a few remarks on your projects for the reduction of all the navies of Europe *. " The " idea of having navies for the protection of " commerce, is deluſive. It is putting the " means of deſtruction for the means of " protection. Commerce needs no other " protection than the reciprocal intereſt " which every nation feels in ſupporting it; " it is common ſtock; it exiſts by a balance " of advantages to all, &c." From a man who never preaches up *theoretical reforms*, we could not well expect a project that had leſs connection with *practice*. The fleets of Britain, Holland, France, Ruſſia, and Spain, are all to be burnt; thoſe of Portugal and Sweden are to add to the brilliant conflagration, and Mr. Paine is to be ſurety to Europe, that the foreſts of America ſhall never float upon the ocean, and dictate to us the terms on which ſhe chooſes us to trade with

* Rights of Man, ſecond Part, page 88.

her,

her, and with each other. He who is ſo little verſed in human nature, as to think that men could live without governments, will take upon himſelf to announce, that among the many provinces of that vaſt continent, notwithſtanding the variety of character that different habits and climates muſt create, notwithſtanding the various revolutions they may undergo, not one of them will ever be liable to the errors of former ſtates, not one of them will ever be blinded by the ſame infirmities, or animated by the ſame ambition. He will enſure to us, that the equity of Europe will quietly leave us in poſſeſſion of the India trade, as a recompence for the expences we have incurred by the maintenance of our eaſtern dominions. He will guard us from the combinations of the private pirates of European countries, and defend us from the piratical nations of Africa. He will be reſponſible, that Sweden and Norway, and thoſe neighbouring countries that nature has endowed with abundance of thoſe productions which would enable them to rebuild their navy, would not be ungenerous enough to do ſo, when we could no longer pre-

prevent them ; or if all theſe aſſurances did not perfectly quiet our fears, he would, with a magic wand, annihilate fleets and foreſts together. With theſe few remarks I leave the public to contemplate the plan of this *practical reformiſt*. As I do not feel inclined to dwell on your pretenſions to political fame and conſequence, or to take the trouble of comparing your account of your outſet in life, with the account that has * lately been publiſhed of it, I paſs directly to your obſervations on corporations. You who ſo often make a difficulty where none exiſts, and overlook one entirely where others ſee the greateſt, cannot ſurprize me by the great difficulty you find in tracing corporations to their origin. After the fall of the Roman Empire, many of the principal towns in Europe were chiefly inhabited by artiſts and traders, who were nearly in the ſame ſtate of ſervitude and oppreſſion, with the occupiers of land in the country. The barbarous habits of thoſe days, made it eſſential for the common defence, that the whole country

* Life of Thomas Pain.

ſhould

ſhould be prepared to take the field, and that military ſubordination ſhould pervade every branch of ſociety. Whenever the country was reſpited from war and inſurrection, the farmers returned to the plough, and theſe traders travelled from place to place, diſpoſing of their goods at different fairs and villages. But even this infant traffic was checked by the arbitrary taxes with which it was loaded, by tolls on the paſſage of certain bridges, and fines for the liberty of erecting booths, &c. &c. Some particular traders, and afterwards towns, obtained grants of exemption from theſe taxes, in conſideration of a fixed annual fine to the king; and with theſe exemptions they uſually obtained charters for erecting them into corporate bodies, with magiſtrates of their own, with independent laws and diſcipline, and various other important acquiſitions. At the time, therefore, that theſe charters were granted, they did not confer privileges on the burghers at the expence of any other claſs of men. The burghers were indeed the firſt, whoſe rights and liberties were reſtored, and the firſt who reaped the advantages of approaching civili-

zation; till then the rights of citizens had been loſt in the ſervitude of ſoldiers, and the charms of independence had been baniſhed by the neceſſity of diſcipline. Their emancipation was, beſides, the firſt dawn of light on the commercial intereſts of this country, the firſt meaſure that protected trade againſt plunder, and the origin of that vaſt fabrick of commerce, with which the greatneſs of Britain is interwoven.

I have now traced corporations to their riſe, and as you have laid it down as a maxim, that governments have never ſerved trade, I have endeavoured to ſhew, how eſſentially they did ſo, by the inſtitution in queſtion. As to the privilege of corporations in ſending repreſentatives to parliament, it is a ſubject more intricate and important. There are, however, but two grounds on which it can be argued; on the ground of policy, and on the ground of rights. I have never, I confeſs, thoroughly underſtood the ground of rights. It appears to me, to be a mere theoretical one, on which no nation ever builds its practice. On the ground of rights,

rights, I do not ſee why the right of voting ſhould not extend to a free-born beggar. Certainly the French ſyſtem of limiting the right of voting, to thoſe free-born ſubjects who contribute to the ſtate taxes equal to the value of three days labor, is founded not on rights, but on policy. I ſhould be glad to know, in what *code of rights* it is to be found, that the value of *three days labor*, ſhould confer a right of voting more than the value of *two*; of *two* more than of *one*; of *one* more than of *half a one*. The fact is, that it is a reſtriction founded merely upon *policy*, and when this is once eſtabliſhed, it is evident that it becomes a ſubject of national enquiry, to be diſcuſſed and decided on principles of policy. The Engliſh nation, therefore, that reſtricts the number of its voters, ſomewhat more than the French nation, does not aſſume any new or extraordinary power, but only exerciſes the ſame unalienable branch of national authority, in a manner ſomewhat different. On the ground of rights, therefore, this matter cannot be argued, and on the ground of policy, it has already been ſupported by much abler hands.

Having already met your arguments on the ſubject of the houſe of peers, I ſhall now only take notice of a new obſervation that you make upon it. It is, you ſay, a combination of perſons in a common intereſt, and therefore you think it an inſtitution injurious to the ſtate. To this I anſwer, that there can be no grounds for a concluſion ſo alarming. It is, perhaps, the only ſet of individuals in the kingdom, who muſt always forward the intereſts of the country, by purſuing their own. The merchant, the monied man, the ſtockholder, the officers in both the military lines, may all have temporary intereſts, widely different from the intereſt of the nation. But the intereſts of the * landlord, always in uniſon with the intereſts of the country, can only be promoted and ſecured by the ſame meaſures. The high price of his land, and the flouriſhing condition of his eſtate, is the true barometer of national proſperity. His affluence is grafted on his country's wealth. With it, it thrives, and with it, it expires. From

* Wealth of Nations.

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an inſtitution compoſed of ſuch members, we have nothing to dread, and every thing to hope; and we can never regret having placed a portion of the legiſlative authority in the hands of guardians, whoſe intereſts and affections muſt be for ever united to ſerve us.

There now only remains to be noticed, your indecent abuſe of the crown, before I come to the financial part of your treatiſe; but as you only attack it with looſe and general invective, it is unneceſſary to enter into a detail of the advantages which flow from it. I ſhall content myſelf with reminding you of the ſecurity and ſtability that we derive from it, and of the miſeries that prevailed during the ſhort time that it was aboliſhed.

So much for your doctrines relative to commerce and to government. Let us now take a curſory view of your projects of finance. I ſhall dwell only on the principal objects of your ſpeculation.

The firſt object that you attempt, is to make it appear, that the ſyſtem of taxation, and the burdens of the people, tended to the rapid decreaſe of one fourth, during the firſt four centuries from the conqueſt, and held a directly oppoſite courſe during the remaining three. To eſtabliſh this propoſition, you produce * two tables of the taxes during thoſe two periods, in which you ſimply ſtate their amount at the cloſe of each century; and without ſupporting the accuracy of the various ſums, by any calculations of your own, you refer your readers to Sir John Sinclair, and ground the whole ſtatement on his authority. I have ſearched Sir John Sin-

* Table I. Rights of Man, part 2, page 109.

Annual amount of taxes levied by William the Conqueror, beginning in (1066)	£ 400,000
Annual amount of taxes levied at one hundred years from the conqueſt (1166)	200,000
Ditto in 1266 - - -	150,000
Ditto in 1366 - - -	130,000
Ditto in 1466 - - -	100,000
Table II. Page 110.	
Ditto in 1566 - - -	500,000
Ditto in 1666 - - -	1,800,000
Ditto in 1791 - - -	17,000,000

clair's

clair's Hiſtory of the public Revenue with great attention, but find nothing that ſupports the very firſt fact which you bring forward, namely, that William the Conqueror levied taxes to the amount of 400,000l. Sir John Sinclair indeed ſays, that the whole income of the crown ariſing from its extenſive domains, and from occaſional taxes, exactions, and voluntary contributions, produced a nett revenue of 400,000l. in William's reign; but the taxes afforded but a ſmall part of this revenue, and the burdens of the peo le were never lighter than in that reign. The tax of Danegeld, the only heavy or permanent one then ſubſiſting, though it had, on great emergencies, occaſionally riſen from one to ſix ſhillings per hide of land, could not even at that higheſt rate, have produced a ſixth part of the ſovereign's income. The ſame confuſion of rents, gifts, exactions, and taxes, prevails throughout your other ſtatements, but it is enough that I have pointed out your error in the firſt inſtance. With regard to the courſe of taxation during theſe four centuries, the fact is, that as the crown lands were gradually alie-

nated, and the ſyſtem of extortion, as well as ſome of thoſe lucrative prerogatives of the crown, which were founded on the feudal ſyſtem, were by degrees aboliſhed; the loſſes that the crown thereby ſuſtained, were proportionably repaired by increaſe of taxation. Whatever therefore may have been the ſtate of the income of the ſovereign, and whatever fluctuations it may have undergone during that period, the annual amount of the taxes was conſtantly increaſing, and probably in a very rapid manner. Had even your ſtatement of the taxes been the true one, the decreaſe of taxation from century to century, would have been an unſound inference. You ſtate, for inſtance, that the taxes in 1366, amounted to 130,000l. and the taxes in 1466, to 100,000l. and conclude therefore, without further conſideration, that taxation had decreaſed from 1366 to 1466. But we muſt not compute the value of a tax by the number of metal pieces paid into the coffers of the Treaſury, but by the ability it gives government to command labor and proviſions. Towards the concluſion of the fourth century from the conqueſt, (about 1470)

1470) the average price of the quarter of wheat was about ten ſhillings of our preſent money; in the preceding century, it was about twenty ſhillings per quarter. A hundred thouſand pounds therefore contributed to government in 1466, would have given it as great a command over labor and proviſions, as two hundred thouſand pounds in 1366, and of conrſe a greater than one hundred and thirty thouſand; or in other words, 100,000l. in 1466, would have been equivalent to a greater quantity of the real wealth of the country, that is, to a greater quantity of the produce of its labor, than 130,000l. would have been equivalent to in 1366, and of courſe would have been a greater tax.

I now proceed to your ſtatement of the taxes in 1566, 1666, and 1791. You ſtate the amount of the taxes in 1566, at 500,000l. and in 1666, at 1,800,000l. and from thence infer an enormous increaſe in taxation. I ſhall firſt endeavor to ſhew, that this concluſion cannot be drawn even from your own premiſes; and next, that the premiſes on which you have founded it, are inaccurate.

rate. We have already ſeen, that the average price of wheat per quarter, at the cloſe of the fifteenth century, was about ten ſhillings, and it continued ſo till 1570, or 1571, four or five years ſubſequent to the period at which you ſtate the amount of the taxes to have been 500,000l. but the great influx of precious metals, from the new and fertile mines of America, which had taken place between 1590 and 1666, raiſed the money price of wheat per quarter, from ten to forty, and even forty-one ſhillings. In 1566, therefore, 500,000l. could command as great a quantity of labor and neceſſaries, as 2,000,000l. could in 1666; ſo that the nation, though it parted with money to the amount of 1,800,000l. in 1666, did not part with ſo great a quantity of its real wealth, or incur ſo great and burdenſome a tax, as if it had parted with 500,000l. in 1566. Taking then the facts as you ſtate them, it would follow, that the taxes had decreaſed in this century; but as I have reaſon to think, that you ſomewhat * exaggerate the amount of

* Hiſtory of the Public Revenues of Great Britain, page 135.

the

the revenues in 1566, the real ſtate of the caſe is, I believe, that the taxes were in ſome degree greater in 1666 than at the former period; and here I cannot help obſerving with what caution you paſs over the only period in which the expences of this country were really and unneceſſarily enormous. I allude to that interval between the governments of the two Charles's, when the kingdom was converted into a common-wealth; its expences, during that change, exceeded belief; notwithſtanding the declenſion of commerce from the paſt troubles, and of courſe the impoveriſhed ſtate of the national reſources, the expenditure of the country was more than quadrupled *. During the nineteen years of the Common-Wealth, it raiſed by taxes, ſales, and other means, the enormous ſum of eighty-three millions, three hundred and thirty-one thouſand, one hundred and ninety-eight pounds; and Crom-

* Charles the Firſt's Revenue was about 895,819l. Hiſt. Rev. p. 167; and the Common-Wealth Revenues, 4,385,850l. Hiſtory of Public Revenues, p. 177.

well,

well, notwithſtanding, left a conſiderable debt.

I come now to the laſt article in your ſtatement, the 17,000,000l. with which it cloſes. It muſt be evident to every body, that you preſent this vaſt increaſe of taxation to convey a falſe idea of a proportionably increaſing expence in government; if this had not been your object, you would not ſo induſtriouſly have confounded the intereſt of our debt with the national expenditure. As the riſe and progreſs of funded debt is a ſubject much too extenſive for this or any letter, I ſhall confine myſelf to a few general remarks on the preſent ſtriking increaſe of taxes. Setting aſide then the intereſt of our funded and unfunded debt, which abſorbs nearly two thirds of the national income, the remainder is no doubt a greater ſum than ever was before granted for the annual ſupport of government; but this is not to be attributed to the profuſion of government, but to the natural progreſs of wealth and luxury: the expences of governments muſt neceſſarily bear ſome proportion to the ex-

pences

pences of individuals. Conſult the various perpetual annuities, which were conſidered when they were given as an ample proviſion for the perſons in whoſe favour they were granted, and you will find them in the preſent age ridiculouſly incompetent to the original deſign. The ſame may be ſaid of the ſums formerly deſtined to ſupport fleets and armies, and all their attendant expences. Within this laſt century, the expenditure in every rank of ſociety has been inconceivably augmented, and government has by no means exceeded its proportion: the encreaſe of the perſonal expences of the Crown may be fairly ſupported on the ſame grounds. Beſides, when we granted it an annual ſum, in return for the lucrative privileges with which it parted, we ſhould have dealt very unfairly by the ſovereign, if we had intended to preclude the poſſibility of ever increaſing it: that would have been taking from him an income that would have been always increaſing, and giving him in exchange one that muſt have been always ſtationary. I ſhall only add, in addition to this, that in an improved

proved and flouriſhing country like ours, whilſt every claſs of citizens is daily augmenting its poſſeſſions and embelliſhing them, it would be ungenerous in the extreme to wiſh that the ſovereign ſhould be the only member of the ſociety excluded from the enjoyment and advantages of increaſing luxury and expence. The learned and well-informed author of the Wealth of Nations coincides preciſely in this opinion, and to him I refer thoſe who wiſh for more exten ſive information on theſe ſubjects.

The next object that preſents itſelf in your financial ſyſtem, is your propoſal to reduce the whole peace eſtabliſhment to 1,500,000l. a ſum conſiderably ſmaller than the peace eſtabliſhment of two centuries ago; but as this calculation is formed on the romantic notion of deſtroying our navy and ſubverting our conſtitution, I ſhall not enter further into the ſubject. Beſides, I ſhould have great difficulties to encounter: the expence of building fleets is well known, but the expence that might be incurred by deſtroying them,

is

is ſuch unbeaten ground, that I know not how to compute it. I will, however, endeavour to make myſelf maſter of this ingenious ſpeculation, and when I have collected the requiſite information, and procured an eſtimate of Wat Tyler's monument, and the other extraordinaries of the year, I will meet you again on what may be a competent proviſion for the public ſervices.

There now only remains for conſideration, firſt, your ſcheme for aboliſhing the poor rates; ſecondly, your plan for ſupplying their place; and thirdly, your project for converting the commutation-tax into a progreſſive land-tax. I ſhall ſpeak to theſe three points in order, and with as much conciſeneſs as the ſubject will admit of.

On the firſt, I ſhall merely ſay, that if the poor are to have a proviſion made for them out of the ſuperfluities of the rich, it is not eaſy to conceive a more effective mode of accompliſhing this humane object, than by making none but the affluent contribute;

and making them contribute according to their abilities.

The ſecond object, namely, your plan for ſupplying the place of the poor rates, deſtroys I think one of the principal benefits of the ſyſtem you would ſuperſede. According to the preſent inſtitution, the whole of what is thought neceſſary for the relief of the poor, is aſſeſſed upon the rich, according to their different abilities; but according to your plan of providing for them out of the taxes, the contribution would be levied indiſcriminately, on all ranks and conditions; in this caſe, therefore, the rich would contribute a part only, inſtead of the whole of it; and that part which would be taken from the poor, to return to the poor again, would return to them reduced by the deductions of collection and diſtribution: the revenue and pariſh officers would be the only gainers: this would be a very round-about mode of relieving the poor; it would be firſt adding to their natural poverty, by the increaſed poverty ariſing from oppreſſive taxes, and then providing for both together. I will now conſider it in

another point of view: let us ſuppoſe, that the country, from its flouriſhing condition, is enabled to reduce its income, the point in queſtion is, whether it is more advantageous to take off a portion of the taxes, or to ſuppreſs the poor rates, and give the poor an * equivalent out of the ſurplus taxes? If you ſuppreſs the poor rates, and give the poor only two millions out of the ſurplus taxes, it is evident that the relief to the country is partial: the rich ſave that portion of the two millions of taxes, that the poor contribute towards them; and the poor are in preciſely the ſame ſituation; they part daily with the ſame quantity of money, for the various articles that they daily conſume, and they receive no additional relief: but if you ſuffer the poor rates to remain as they are, and take off taxes to the amount of two mil-

* I ſay an equivalent, becauſe it is only in that way that the real merits of the caſe can be argued. It would certainly be more profitable for the poor, to receive four millions than two; but if ſuch an increaſe of proviſion was neceſſary, it could juſt as well be effected through the medium of aſſeſſed rates; it is on the means of relief, and not on the quantity which may be requiſite, that I am arguing.

lions on candles, and ſuch other articles as fall heavy upon the poor, you would relieve the poor of a great portion of their taxes, and relieve the rich alſo. Beſides this, when you take off taxes from conſumable articles, the poor do not merely gain at the end of the year, the difference of price ariſing from the diminution of the tax; but as they have every day ſomething leſs to pay for their candles, * malt, &c. they have every day ſomething more to ſpare for the purchaſe of wool, or ſuch other raw articles, as they can add value to by their labor. A poor manufacturer, who had taxes to the amount of three pounds a year remitted to him, would be much more effectually relieved, than one that received a penſion of ſix pounds a year. Every day would leave in his pocket, that part of the price of his proviſions, and raw materials, &c. which would otherwiſe have

* I mention malt, becauſe no claſs brews beer for its own conſumption, more than the labouring poor in this country, which controverts your fact of the tax on beer brewed for ſale, falling partially on the poor. The rich, who often live in London, when there, always buy their beer. The poor, who live all the year in one place, brew almoſt univerſally for themſelves.

been

been reſolvable into taxes. It is true, that the ſum total of his daily ſavings, would at the cloſe of the year, amount only to half his penſion; but if we conſider the number of times, between January and December, that the ſavings of the firſt and ſecond weeks, (and the others in proportion) have gone from him to purchaſe raw materials, and returned to him with increaſe, in the price of the manufactured commodity, we ſhall ſee that the rapid accumulation of profits to which the original ſaving gave birth, will at the end of the twelve months, produce a ſum much more conſiderable than the penſion. This is a fact, which relates to the whole body of poor. In every family, there are manufacturers; and if the huſband is at the plough, the wife and children are ſpinning the wool that they have bought out of their ſavings, to re-ſell with a profit. The ſame may be argued, if a neceſſity exiſted for increaſing the proviſion for the poor to 4,000,000l. and that there were 4,000,000l. of ſurplus taxes to diſpoſe of; if you aboliſhed the poor rates, and appropriated the

4,000,000l. ſurplus taxes to the poor, * the rich would gain 2,000,000l. and the poor 2,000,000l. But if you left the poor rates, and by a judicious abolition of the four millions of ſurplus taxes, you could ſave the poor † 400,000l. per annum, you would ſave the rich 3,600,000l. Increaſe the poor rates 1,000,000l. a year, the rich would remain gainers of 2,600,000l. inſtead of 2,000,000l. and the poor would gain 1,000,000l. in direct contribution, and a daily ſaving of above a 1000l. which would be a rapidly increaſing fund, and a much greater ſupport than another million of direct contribution paid to them in yearly ſums of ten pounds, and ſix pounds, and twenty ſhillings, on births and marriages, according to your ſyſtem.

* By the rich, I mean thoſe who contribute to the poor rates; by the poor, thoſe who do not; there cannot be any body omitted in ſuch a diviſion.

† I ſay 400,000l. becauſe I ſaid 200,000l. when I was conſidering an abolition of 2,000,000l. taxes; but one, two, three, four, or five hundred thouſand, would anſwer my purpoſe juſt as well; it is mere ſuppoſition, in order to carry on the argument.

But

But there are other arguments in favour of the abolition of taxes, and againſt the abolition of poor rates, and which, if it was otherwiſe matter of indifference, would be of themſelves concluſive. By the abolition of poor rates, you would encreaſe the revenues of the rich, and ſo far as that goes, you would encreaſe the price of commodities by increaſing their conſumption; but by an abolition of taxes you would materially lower the price of all commodities, by lowering the price of proviſions and of labour. We ſhould therefore be enabled to underſell foreign nations to a much greater amount than we can now; our exports would increaſe rapidly, and we ſhould thereby provide in the beſt poſſible manner for our poor, by affording a vaſt addition of employment to the induſtrious.

Before I quit this ſubject, I muſt ſay a few words on your ſcheme for providing for the labouring poor by fixed and regular annuities, that at certain * periods of their

* From fifty upwards, the annuity increaſing at ſixty.

life

life are to become their right of courſe. I think an annuity of 6l. or 10l. a year, merely becauſe a man happens to have been born fifty or ſixty years, would tend to make both him and his children idle; and I think that among the 140,000 poor that you mean to provide for in this way, ſcarcely any will, at that early time of life, be unable to ſabour from infirmities, and that therefore it is unjuſt to expect ſuch a contribution from the wealthy and induſtrious.

It ſtrikes me beſides, that by adopting this meaſure, the market price of labour would be encreaſed by a double operation, and that commerce would thereby receive a check, independent of the wound occaſioned by keeping up taxes (which might otherwiſe be aboliſhed) in order to carry this plan into execution. The market price of labour would be increaſed, by thus giving a certain proviſion to 140,000 labouring members of ſociety; firſt, becauſe they would all, on that account, become more indifferent to whether they obtained employment, and of courſe more exorbitant in the terms on which they would accept

accept it; and, ſecondly, becauſe a great number of the 140,000 would naturally be induced to waſte a conſiderable portion of their time in idleneſs, and the ſupply of labor being thereby diminiſhed, whilſt the demand for it continued the ſame, the induſtrious would be enabled to raiſe their wages as well as the indolent. I ſhall now quit this ſubject, on which I have been induced to dwell conſiderably from its intricacy. I have endeavoured to ſhew, firſt, that your mode of relieving the poor would be a very round-about one; ſecondly, that it would be by no means an effective one, conſidering the magnitude of the ſum; thirdly, that it would be very injurious to commerce, by leaving the whole load of taxes on proviſions and commodities, whilſt it ſo eſſentially relieved revenues; and fourth, that it gave a check to commerce (independent of the one juſt mentioned) by occaſioning a riſe of wages.

The third and laſt point which I propoſed conſidering, was your project for converting the commutation tax into a progreſſive land-

tax,

tax. Such a meaſure would give a mortal ſtab to commerce and proſperity. Agriculture, the great and fertile ſource out of which the luxuries of all ages have been purchaſed and ſupplied, would, by its adoption, be robbed at one blow, of all its advantages. The only employment of capital, which is always lucrative, and the returns of which are uniformly certain; the only employment of capital in which nature aſſiſts us to accumulate our gains, would be for ever barren of all profits. The proprietor of 10,000l. a year, who by laying out 10,000l. could raiſe his eſtate to 11,000l. a year, would incur an additional tax of 400l. per annum, and of courſe never undertake the improvement; the proprietor of 11,000l. a year, who by laying out 10,000l. could raiſe his eſtate to 12,000l. a year, would incur an additional tax of 450l. per annum, and therefore find the improvement ſtill leſs practicable. The proprietor of 23,000l. a year, who by raiſing his eſtate to 24,000l. a year, would incur an additional tax of 1000l. per annum; for that, and every increaſing thouſand, would not lay out five pounds, if he could double its produce.

In

In every ſmaller eſtate, the tax operates in a ſimilar manner, though in a leſs proportion; It gives therefore a decided check to the progreſs of improvement; it operates as a heavy fine upon the employments of ſmall capitals in agriculture and improvement, and it amounts to a prohibition of great ones.

As one of your great objects is to throw upon the landholders the whole weight of the commutation tax, in order to bring the balance of burthens to its proper level, I muſt ſay a few words on the proportion of taxes, which the landholders already pay. Beſides their ſhare of all taxes on articles of conſumption, beſides the land-tax, their ſhare of the poor rates, commutation tax, &c. there is one very important national expence, which is levied ſolely upon land; I mean the maintenance of the clergy. Tythes, the heavieſt of all burdens, becauſe ſomething of the nature of your progreſſive tax, falls on the landholder alone; compute then his ſhares of the taxes that all contribute to, and add the amount of thoſe that he only pays, and you will ſee how outrageouſly unjuſt, would

be the new burden that you propoſe to lay upon him.

Having now ſhewn the baneful influence of this tax on agriculture and commerce, and offered my objections to it as a matter of equity, I ſhall now conclude with a very few obſervations on its political effects.

In this point of view, one of its moſt immediate conſequences would be, the extermination of the influence of men of property. This is indeed one of the great effects that you wiſh it to produce; but I think it is an effect, that would in the end, be found prejudicial in the extreme to the intereſts of this country. There are but two ſets of men in ſociety, who have a great and natural influence over its inferior claſſes. Theſe are the landholder and the merchant. The proprietor of land, has neceſſarily great weight with his tenantry; and the merchant, with the number of artificers and manufacturers, to whom his capital affords employment and ſubſiſtence. The intereſt that the merchant has amongſt this extenſive ſet of people, it

is

is not in the power of any human inſtitution to ſuppreſs. The intereſt of the landholder may, indeed, be thoroughly extirpated; and would be ſo by your ſyſtem, of forcing landed property into ſuch ſmall ſubdiviſions. But to effect a ſimilar ſub-diviſion of mercantile capital, would be abſolutely impracticable. To what a deplorable ſituation then, would your project reduce a country! It is a fact fully eſtabliſhed, that the intereſt of the proprietor of land, is always the ſame with the intereſt of the country, though the intereſt of the merchant is often widely different. You would therefore leave the influence, that might be injurious in its full vigor, and wholly extirpate the one that muſt ever be beneficial. But this ſtriking error in your plan, owes its exiſtence to your principles. Your ſyſtem is to *deſtroy*; and where evils could not be radically aboliſhed, you have always forgot, that they might poſſibly be counterbalanced.

I ſhall now conclude this long letter, in conſideration of you and of the public. Whether or not the reſt of Europe may ever adopt

adopt your meaſures, I ſincerely hope that they never may be encouraged in this country. When hereditary honors, and hereditary property die, the ſtockholder's exiſtence hangs but by a ſingle thread. If we can tear from the true deſcendants, the titles and eſtates which their anceſtors purchaſed with lives of toil and hardſhip; if we can diſſolve the terms on which our fore-fathers have bequeathed their property, we cannot be bound by the conditions of their debt.

I am, &c. &c.

London, March 2, 1792.

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FINIS.